

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRAGUE 00166 201227Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 AGRE-00 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 STR-06
TRSE-00 FRB-03 OMB-01 /094 W
-----078943 210352Z /64

R 201145Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4539
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 0166

BRUSSELS FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ECON, EEWT, EG, UR, CZ
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN COTTON EMBARGO AGAINST CZECHOSLOVAKIA

REF CAIRO 23105 (NOTAL)

1. IN RECENT CONVERSATION, EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR MOHAMED MOUSTAFA CHOUCRI TOLD ME THAT ALTHOUGH EGYPT'S COTTON EMBARGO AGAINST CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAS BEEN IN FORCE SINCE JANUARY 1, THE CZECHOSLOVAKS CAN EFFECTIVELY CIRCUMVENT IT, IF THEY WISH TO TAP THEIR HARD CURRENCY RESOURCES BY BUYING FROM OTHER SOURCES. CHOUCRI HAS RELAYED TO CAIRO HIS QUESTIONING OF THE WISDOM OF THE EMBARGO, SINCE THE CZECHOSLOVAKS ARE MERELY SOVIET PAWNS AND FIND THEMSELVES UNHAPPILY VICTIMIZED BY SADAT'S PIQUE AGAINST MOSCOW. CAIRO SYMPATHIZED, ACCORDING TO CHOUCRI, BUT ARGUED THAT, FOR APPEARANCES SAKE, CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAD TO BE INCLUDED IN THE SUSPENSION. HE PERSONALLY BELIEVES CAIRO MAY SHOW SOME FLEXIBILITY IN THE APPLICATION OF THE EMBARGO HERE.

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PAGE 02 PRAGUE 00166 201227Z

2. CHOUCRI INTIMATED THAT WHILE THE COTTON EMBARGO IS A PROBLEM FOR THE CZECHOSLOVAKS (HE NOTED THAT EGYPTIAN COTTON IS A SPECIAL SIZE AND NOT EASILY REPLACED WITHOUT SUBSTANTIAL MACHINERY ALTERATIONS), IT IS NOT CRITICAL SINCE RAW COTTON IS AVAILABLE ELSEWHERE. HE KNOWS, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT CZECHOSLOVAKIA IS TALKING TO TURKEY AND

AT LEAST TWO OTHER COUNTRIES ABOUT MAKING UP THE SHORTFALL.
DURING THE EMBARGO EGYPT PROBABLY WILL CONTINUE TO SHIP YARN
TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA UNDER TERMS OF A 1977 AGREEMENT, BUT THE COTTON
CONTENT MAY BE LOWER.

3. CHOUCRI FEELS THAT THE CZECHOSLOVAKS MAY BE CHAFING MORE FROM
POLITICAL EFFECTS OF THE EMBARGO THAN FROM THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS,
SINCE THEY VIEW IT AS DAMAGING TO THEIR INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION
AND REINFORCING THEIR IMAGE AS A SOVIET SATELLITE.

4. IN A PREVIOUS INCARNATION CHOUCRI TRAVELED FREQUENTLY TO
MOSCOW TO NEGOTIATE FOR SHIPMENTS OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO
EGYPT, SO I NOTED PARTICULARLY HIS MENTION OF A JANUARY 12
CONVERSATION WITH THE GOC WHICH, ACCORDING TO HIS SOMEWHAT SKETCHY
ACCOUNT, WOULD LIKE TO LINK THE QUESTION OF COTTON DELIVERIES WITH
RE-INSTITUTING THE SALES OF CZECHOSLOVAK TANKS TO EGYPT.
EGYPT HAS, CHOUCRI ADDED, COMPLETELY PAID ITS MILITARY
EQUIPMENT ACCOUNT HERE WITH CONSIDERABLE ASSISTANCE FROM SAUDI
ARABIA.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COTTON
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978PRAGUE00166
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780032-0075
Format: TEL
From: PRAGUE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780140/aaaabhjj.tel
Line Count: 82
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e81cc7e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 CAIRO 23105
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3740534
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EGYPTIAN COTTON EMBARGO AGAINST CZECHOSLOVAKIA
TAGS: ECON, EEWT, EG, UR, CZ
To: CAIRO
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e81cc7e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014